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ABSTRACT

Published articles about grading systems in general are listed in the first section of this annotated bibliography. A brief abstract of each article is provided. In the second section, Some Marking Systems in Current Use, credit grading policies used by nine community and junior colleges are described. (KM)

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Current Research on Grading Systems of Possible Significance to Junior Colleges

(An annotated bibliography)

By J. H. Caldwell

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Bain, Philip T., Hales, Loyde W., and Rand, Leonard P. "Does Pass-Fail Encourage Exploration?" College and University, XLVII, No. 1 (Fall, 1971), p. 17f.

The hypothesis that a pass-fail grading option encourages students to explore subjects outside his major field was tested. A questionnaire was used and results suggested otherwise. Numerous students used the option to provide GPA protection from a difficult course. Suggests negative effects from the pass-fail option. (With bibliography)

Barnes, Katharine F., and Barnes, E. H. "A Realistic Approach to Grading," Clearing House, XXXVI, No. 8 (April, 1962), pp.476-78.

Offers a fresh approach to grading. Suggests that ranking of students be utilized rather than grading. Emphasizes that a grade based upon an arbitrary percentage of pass-fail ignores variations in class composition. Feels it is fruitless to try to establish any absolute standard for A, B, C, D grading until we can develop achievement measures with a zero point and equal units.

Birney, Robert C. "The Effects of Grades on Students," Journal of Higher Education, XXXV, No. 2 (February, 1964), pp. 96-98.

This work concerns itself with the role of grades as an incentive to behavior. It outlines findings of a questionnaire and interviews. Suggests that satisfaction with academic work follows lines of interests not grade lines and that experience shows much grading to be arbitrary and capricious in character.

Bloom, Gerald. "There Should Be No F's," Business Education World, XLVI, No. 7 (March, 1966), p. 13f.

This article points out that students should be judged on whether or not they are achieving their potential. He continues that to write off a person on the basis of grades is foolhardy. The person performing in a low manner should be examined to determine the reason. No actual grading system change is proposed.

Borland, David T. "The Effect of Mid-term Grades on the Academic Performance of College Freshmen," College and University, XLV, No. 2 (Winter, 1970), pp. 181-85.

Report of a study at Miami University Ohio where mid-term grades were compared with final grades. Data showed the majority of students remained at the same academic standing at semester's end. There are significant minorities. The

study suggests methods of feedback other than traditional grading systems need to be investigated. (With bibliography)

Cady, J. D. "How Important are College Grades?" Journal of Higher Education, XXXVII, No. 8 (November, 1966), pp. 441-45.

This article is an interpretation of three separate studies which were made to determine the grading practices at Ouachita Baptist College and various other institutions in the United States. Results of these studies lead to serious questioning of the reliability of present college grading practices. The lack of thoughtful study given to grading practices is scored.

Chansky, Norman M. "X-ray of the School Mark," Educational Forum, XXVI, No. 3 (March, 1962), pp. 347-352.

Deals with educational objectives, individual differences as well as student knowledges and deficits. Reviews concepts of numerical and letter grades including grade reliability - validity. Evidence is given for doing away with grades.

Chrismer, John M. "Let's Take Another Look at Grades," Business Education Forum, XXIV, No. 3 (December, 1969), p. 28f.

Suggests that many teachers have to follow a long-established grading policy which seems in contrast to their educational objectives. A model is given for developing a grading system which is more meaningful. The author indicates that much can be done under our present grading system to improve it.

Claunch, Sidney J. "Effects of Pass-Fail Grading on Quality Point Averages," College and University, XLVII, No. 2 (Winter, 1972), pp. 93-105.

Raises questions regarding pass-fail and pass-no-record grading systems. Explores philosophical and economic reasons for and against these non-traditional grading systems. Asks what an average is supposed to mean and what purposes are intended to be served? Alternative systems to serve the traditional functions of the quality-point average are considered.

Clements, William H. "Pass-Fail: Were Your Hypotheses Valid?" College and University, XLVI, No. 4 (Summer, 1971), pp.535-542.

The author feels that what is initially needed is to determine what need there is for a grading system, how it may be useful, and what constitutes a good system. Suggests chief uses of grades are (1) to provide some standard kind of feedback (2) to provide information that will guide in the students placement

for future learning situations and (3) to provide the student information that will help to place him in the kind of work he should be doing. The status of pass-fail experiments are discussed as well as some tentative conclusions and alternatives.

Collins, Charles C. "A Point of View on Grading Standards," Junior College Journal, XXXV, No. 7 (April, 1965), pp. 21-23.

Suggests that junior colleges do not have to join upper division colleges and universities in their boasts of higher and higher selectivity. Also, it is indicated that high standards of learning involve more than just a tough grading system. Emphasizes improvement of instructional process with less emphasis on grades.

Collins, Charles C. "Grading Standards in the Junior College," Junior College Journal, XXXVI, No. 4 (December, 1965 - January, 1966), pp. 33-36.

The author proposes a new grading system. Believes previous grading practices are a "disqualification process." He deals with philosophic assumptions and studies done at Grossmont College. The author proposes a system of A, B, C, D. Criteria for various grades are given as well as a process for handling students continuing to do failing work.

Crosman, Arthur M. and Gustav, Alice. "A Useful Classification of Failing Students," School and Society, LXXXIX, No. 2190 (April 8, 1961), p. 188f.

Results of work at Washington Square College (an undergraduate liberal arts division of New York University) in differentiating failing students into groups. Data suggest that placing failing students into two categories provides a clue to teachers and is more valuable than simply labeling students as "failing."

Cummins, Robert E. "The Key is C," Clearing House, XXXIX, No. 6 (February, 1965), p. 363f.

The widespread acceptance of the "C" average criterion sounds a discordant note. Can a "C" graduate maintain the tempo demanded for the nurturing of excellence? The "C" average assumes that those who maintain that average will teach in an average fashion. It therefore confuses product and process. Finally, The institution suggests that some courses are more important than others but then settles for average performance. The author suggests reducing the significance of grades by using an overall evaluation of student factors.

Downing, Marjorie. "Variations in College Grading Systems," Journal of Higher Education, XXXV, No. 2 (February, 1964), pp. 98-100.

Relates that the experience of participants at a conference on college grading systems showed that their uneasiness about the validity of grades was well founded. Few of the fifty odd institutions polled agreed on the meaning of grades. Relates various scales and methods of computing grade-point averages. Indicates breaks with tradition and which institutions are setting up new patterns.

DePue, Palmer. "A rubber Yardstick and the Pursuit of Excellence," Clearing House, XXXVIII, No. 4 (December, 1963), pp. 248-250.

The author believes a return should be made to the use of percentage in marking but not in terms of a fixed set of criteria. He has suggested an instrument of his own design called the omni-quiz. He does not advocate strict use of the normal curve. DePue suggests using the best features of percentage, multiple-choice, and the normal frequency curve. Tends to be traditional.

Fensch, Edwin A. "Good Ol' A, B, C, D and F," Clearing House, XXXVII, No. 2 (October, 1962), pp. 93-95.

Exposes the fallacies and complacencies of our grading systems. No attempt is made to suggest a replacement system in this popularly written article.

Fisher, Margaret B. "Trends in College Students' Grades," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXIX, No. 6 (February, 1961), pp. 491-96.

Four hypotheses are stated and tested. Results showed that (1) contrary to supposition, the annual grade-point average for an entire class did not increase consistently in three consecutive years (2) data do not support the hypothesis that the experience of the class as a whole is congruent with all or a majority of its members (3) the probability that the annual grade point average of students continuing in a given class will earn slightly higher grade point averages each year was not supported and (4) a fourth hypothesis was supported, this was that variations in grade point averages are of such a low order of magnitude that their net effect is to maintain the grade-point average for an entire class at or slightly above the average earned for the freshman year.

Freimuth, Vicki S. "Pass-Fail Grading System," Speech Teacher, XIX, No. 4 (November, 1970), p. 313f.

The author feels that traditional grading systems offer few opportunities for a student to continue work on a difficult

area. Difficulties are dismissed with a D or F grade and this perpetuates similar mistakes on subsequent work. A "S" and "U" system of satisfactory and unsatisfactory is proposed. The author indicates that her experience with the system suggested convinces her that it does have a place in evaluation.

Goldstein, Kenneth M., and Tilker, Harvey A. "Attitudes Toward A-B-C-D-F and Honors-Pass-Fail Grading Systems," Journal of Educational Research, LXV, No. 3 (November, 1971), p. 99f.

Includes results of a questionnaire developed to measure attitudes toward various grading systems. The Honors-Pass-Fail evaluation was reported to be more generally preferable to encourage creativity, to foster real learning, and to be more equitable. Differences among groups are discussed and results are shown supporting arguments for a dual system. (with references)

Grooms, Robert R. and Endler, Norman S. "The Effect of Anxieties on Academic Achievement," Journal of Educational Psychology, LI, No. 5 (October, 1960), pp. 299-304.

Indicates the importance of anxiety and achievement as constructs in our society. Suggests that anxiety is associated with achievement situations through conditioning. A technical work linking anxiety with learning. Selected references are listed.

Haagen, C. Hess. "The Origins of a Grade," Journal of Higher Education, XXXV, No. 2 (February, 1964), pp. 89-91.

States that evaluation is an integral and indispensable part of the learning process but that a growing dissatisfaction with many facets of grading exists. The author believes changes are taking place with will render present systems obsolete outlines items which affect grades.

Haak, Leo A. "A Method of Measuring Individual Student Progress," Journal of Higher Education, XXXI, No. 5 (May, 1960), pp. 252-56.

Explains a system of evaluation used at Michigan State University which measures individual progress rather than pure achievement. Progress is determined by comparing scores made on review tests with scores made on regular weekly tests. The study shows there is an identifiable factor in students' work which may be called an improvement factor. Suggestion is not made that grades be assigned solely on this factor.

Harrington, Eldred R. "The Grade and I," Clearing House, XXXVIII, No. 2 (October, 1963), pp. 96-102.

Written in a casual and conversational manner, this article is a dialogue between the author and his students. Gives historical information on grading systems. Suggests various categories on which the student will be evaluated. Non-traditional in that it is an evaluation of the student on a much wider basis than is usually found.

Haskell, John M. "Pass-Fail? A System Worth Trying," Clearing House, XLII, No. 3 (November, 1967), p. 172f.

This pass-fail system described is a welcomed departure from traditional alphabetical labels. Questions are raised such as, controls used? Criteria for performance? Transferability, etc.? The author sees the introduction of a pass-fail philosophy as a vehicle to encourage students to experiment with his abilities.

Hawk, T. L. and DeRidder, L. M. "A Comparison of the Performance of Pre-graded Students with Grade-Motivated Students," Journal of Educational Research, LVI, No. 10 (July - August, 1963), pp. 548-550.

Results of a study done at the University of Tennessee. Achievement of students whose grade was determined early in the quarter was compared with those traditionally graded. Conclusion was that removal of pressure for a grade acted as a depresant on work input.

Heininger, Joseph F. "The Non-Graded Transcript," Journal of General Education, XXIII, No. 4 (January, 1972), pp. 301-308.

Describes a detailed analysis of 143 schools that were polled regarding reaction of graduate schools to the use of non-graded transcripts. Indicates criteria that graduate schools use for entrance. Shows that grades are the single most important source of information about the student applicant.

Hoyt, Donald P. "Rationality and the Grading Process," Educational Record, LI, No. 3 (Summer, 1970), pp. 305-309.

Dr. Hoyt draws heavily upon current research to answer such questions as: Are college and University grading practices rational in that they follow logical patterns? Can they be predicted by existing knowledge of college characteristics? Are grades themselves defensible? Do they represent a reasonably satisfactory measure of those dimensions of student growth and development relevant to higher education? Well documented. (with references)

Johansson, Charles B., Rossman, Jack E., and Sandell, Sandra D. "The S-U Grading Option at Macalester," Educational Record, LII, No. 3 (Summer, 1971), pp. 273-276.

The authors interviewed students and examined grades for a two year period to analyze any trends over time, to determine who was taking the ungraded option and to determine the impact on academic performance. Well documented and with references.

Johnson, Mauritz, Jr. "Solving the 'Mess in Marks'," Education Digest, XXVII, No. 6 (February, 1962), pp. 12-14.

The author indicates that ambiquity, inconsistency and invalidity are said to characterize our marking systems. He calls on administrators to exert the leadership necessary to make a change. Various purposes of grading are explored as well as various grading systems. He calls for a clarification of the meaning of grades in use.

Johnson, Ray A. and Lauroesch, William. "Pass-Fail System with Options for the Learner," American Vocational Journal, XLIV, No. 6 (September, 1969), pp. 16-65.

An innovative approach to grading is outlined. Suggests establishment of performance criteria in each area of required competance. Also, valid and reliable measures of performance must be identified. Promise of this program is its capacity for liberating education from rigidly defined points of entry and exit. Candidates are able to move toward a degree at a pace limited only by individual motivation and ability.

Ludeman, W. W. "Overhauling School Evaluation," American School Board Journal, CXL, No. 2 (February, 1960), p. 37.

An article which suggests a design for testing along with exploring the dangers of under and over marking. It asks the question "Are failures necessary?" Some guiding principles of evaluation are outlined.

Mannello, George. "College Teaching Without Grades," Journal of Higher Education, XXXV, No. 6 (June, 1964), pp. 328-334.

The author feels that the traditional system of evaluation victimizes both students and instructors. He relates research that was done at Hofstra College in 1962 regarding non-traditional grading. Gains made in the course used as a result of the departure from traditional grading practices are quite important. Side effects such as reduction in cheating and less tension regarding tests are noted.

Mannello, George. "Grades Must Go!" Educational Record, L, No. 3 (Summer, 1969), pp. 305-308.

The author, after several years of research and practical experience, has concluded that one of the best things colleges could do for students is to abolish grades. He proposes a no-grade model and an accompanying evaluation plan. The system he suggests includes one of "acceptable" or "unacceptable" categories.

Melby, Ernest O. "Let's Abolish the Marking System," Nation's Schools, LXXVII, No. 5 (May, 1966), p. 104.

Dr. Melby, a Professor of Education at Michigan State University, indicates that the marking system is damaging in its impact on the education of students and that it is no longer relevant to the needs and educational programs of our society. He believes we should describe a student's growth in meaningful terms which are descriptive of his effort. No model is suggested.

Muessig, Raymond H. "How Do I Grade Thee? Let Me Count The Ways," Clearing House, XXXVI, No. 7 (March, 1962), pp. 414-16.

The author considers grading one of the most frustrating tasks of any instructor. He points out that a solitary symbol (grade) should be assigned only after a many sided consideration of the individual concerned. Written in a popular vein, this suggests reconsideration of grading practices.

Noble, Milton E. "Grading Systems: All Win, No Lose," College and University, XLVI, No. 4 (Summer, 1971), pp. 717-726.

Advantages and disadvantages associated with "no-fail" grading systems are outlined. Indicates that many "no-fail" grading systems are simply those where failing grades are not recorded. Describes system at use at Brown University. Indicates that their system does not deemphasize the evaluation of students or lower academic standards. Suggests that Brown can be regarded as an institution which is committed to the elimination of the traditional grading system.

Perry, Louis B. "College Grading: A Case Study and Its Aftermath," Educational Record, XLIX, No. 1 (Winter, 1968), pp. 78-84.

Indicates that most suggestions for changes have centered around simplification. Studies from several colleges are included. This is a scholarly work on grading inconsistencies where the student is a victim of the process. (with references)

Phillips, John L., Jr. "An Application of Intermittent Grading," Clearing House, XXXIX, No. 5 (January, 1965), p. 305f.

This grading technique is recommended for use at the junior college level. The suggestion is that grades be used as reinforcement and be given intermittently as intermittent reinforcement has proven extremely effective in experimental situations. The procedure proposed leads to a response-to-reinforcement ratio of 2 to 1 making possible twice as much testing or grading of essay type activities. (with reference)

Poppen, William A., and Thompson, Charles L. "The Effect of Grade Contracts on Student Performance," Journal of Educational Research, LXIV, No. 9 (May - June, 1971), pp. 420-424.

This article contains the results of an experiment to answer the question "Are grade contracts of value?" Research did not substantiate the value of grade contracts over traditional approaches. Agrees value might be enhanced by modification. There seems to be no serious disadvantage of this method as a grading procedure.

Quann, Charles, "Survey Shows Variations in Grading Trends," College and University Business, XLIX, No. 3 (September, 1970), p. 78f.

Survey was made of 150 four year colleges and universities. of this number 102 offer pass/fail or a similar grading option. The results seem significant in terms of acceptance of the pass/fail concept. Additional statistics are provided regarding options available at various institutions. The emerging pattern, according to the article, is the credit/no credit system with complete elimination of the concept of "failure."

Quann, Charles J. "The Pass/Fail Option: Analysis of an Experiment in Grading," College and University, XLVI, No. 4 (Summer, 1971), pp. 542-49.

Investigates the pass/fail grading system at Washington State University. Indicates that an analysis of individual cumulative grade-point average compiled showed that the regular enrolees exceeded the pass/fail enrolees in every category. A questionnaire analysis is given as well as suggestions for change in the pass/fail option. Statistics are provided on the academic achievement of pass/fail enrolees.

Quinn, George R. and Szuberia, Charles A. "Relative Grading," Clearing House, XXXVII, No. 8 (April, 1963), pp. 490-94.

Authors present a new system of grading. They do not consider it a panacea but feel it is a reasonably sensible approach.

Through the use of raw scores a frequency distribution is "built." A model is suggested for grading from this distribution. Visual aids are available for the system. The authors feel greater consistency is achieved through their system.

Sgan, Matthew R. "Letter Grade Achievement in Pass-Fail Courses" Journal of Higher Education, XLI, No. 8 (November, 1970), pp. 638-644.

This article deals with how students taking courses under a pass-fail system at Brandeis University would have fared in the usual "A - E" system. A short history of selected institutions with pass/fail systems is included. Through the study, it appears that first and second year students utilize pass-fail to complete general education requirements. First year students ran into trouble with pass-fail. Combinations of reasons for this are explored. Suggestion is made that courses in structured, systematic disciplines utilize pass-fail, while courses in conjectural or modal disciplines utilize only letter grades.

Shea, John B. "The Pass-Fail Option and Physical Education," Journal of Health Physical Education Recreation, XLII, No. 5 (May, 1971), p. 19f.

Mr. shea believes the pass-fail grading option offers the most practical approach for physical education. Suggests that no basic requirements of physical education need change and that this method of grading introduces flexibility into the program of the student. Advantages of the pass-fail option are enumerated.

Simpson, Claude. "The Computer Handles a Unique Pass-Fail System," College and University, XL, No. 4 (Summer, 1969), p. 700f.

Description of a novel, computer handled pass-fail program at Washington State University which does not disrupt the traditional grading pattern. The program is limited to undergraduate students. Data processing forms are displayed and source of additional information is included.

Stallings, William M., Smock, H. Richard, and Leslie, Elwood K., "The Pass-Fail Grading Option," School and Society, XCVI, No. 2305 (March 16, 1968), p. 179f.

Describes some pass-fail systems now in effect and raises administrative questions about certain problems. Suggests rigorous evaluation of pass-fail systems. Authors believe one excellent aspect is that it encourages students to take courses out of their field. (with references)

Stroup, Francis. "The Grade-Point Average is Obsolete," Journal of Higher Education, XXXIV, No. 1 (January, 1963), pp. 10-15.

Suggests that the grade-point average is an overworked and inaccurate instrument for identifying academic failures. A history of college grading is included. The article states that the logic in the G.P.A. system is sound but that the fault lies in mechanics of operation. Suggests an expansion of interval from 4 points to 15 points.

Teaf, Howard M., Jr. "What Price Grades?" Journal of Higher Education, XXXV, No. 2 (February, 1964), pp. 100-103.

The author indicates there is room for improvement in grading systems and in the whole concept of grading. Suggests moving to fewer grade distinctions (high-pass, pass, fail) rather than more. Explores the effect of evaluations not involving number of letter grades. Suggestions are made for further study.

Trow, William Clark. "Grades and Objectives in Higher Education," Educational Record, XLIX, No. 1 (Winter, 1968), pp. 85-91.

Dissatisfied (as are many educators) with the traditional system of letter grading, the author proposes a plan for evaluation that would include the use of high school and college records, interest questionnaires, and the establishment of meaningful course objectives.

Troyer, Lewis. "Grades Have Gone: What Then?" Liberal Education, LVI, No. 4 (December, 1970), pp. 542-556.

This is a detailed description and justification of a new effort to do something constructive about a "widely acknowledged" weakness in American higher education. The article is an account of the establishment and characteristics of a substitute for traditional letter grades. Involves certifying competencies. (with references)

Van Hoven, James B. "Reporting Pupil Progress: A Broad Rationale For New Practices," Phi Delta Kappan, LIII, No. 6 (February, 1972), p. 365f.

The author states that practices are changing to reflect new philosophies and feels that these new practices must be defensible. He believes that reporting pupil progress out to be an integral part of a consistent, whole approach to education. (with references)

Weiss, Robert M. and Rasmussen, Glen R. "Grading Practices in Undergraduate Education Courses," Journal of Higher Education, XXXI, No. 3 (March, 1960), pp. 143-49.

A study of grading practices in six large midwestern state universities. A comparison is made of grading in education, business administration and liberal arts, and science courses.

Yelon, Stephen L. "An Alternative to Letter Grades," Educational Forum, XXXV, No. 1 (November, 1970), pp. 65-70.

The author suggests that a grading system must communicate and that present systems have little meaning. Dr. Yelon indicates an adequate system would include a series of statements so written that any two teachers, given the statements and student's performance, could agree as to whether or not the student had performed as specified. In the article he describes such a system.

_____. "Haverford's New Policy," School and Society, XCV, No. 2294 (October 14, 1967), pp. 340-42.

Describes a new system of grading at Haverford College. The traditional grading system was abandoned except for internal use. However, grades will continue to be recorded in the junior and senior years. This is essentially a pass-fail system designed for the freshman and sophomore years.

_____. "Yales's New System," School And Society, XCVI, No. 2302 (February 3, 1968), p. 61f.

A report of the abolishment of numerical grading in the undergraduate college of Yale. The change was put into effect for five years and included the following categories: Honors, high pass, pass and fail. Prior to this Yale operated on a grading system of 40 to 100. The new grading system under discussion applies only to final course grades.

Some Marking Systems in Current Use

MARKING SYSTEMS

Credit grading policies from the following institutions are included as they are typical of those in use today:

Feather River College
Quincy, California

Marking system A, B, C, D, F, I, W, P*(pass)

Repeating a course with grade under "C" is permitted. Units will be counted once.

(*One "pass-fail" course allowed for 15 units.)

Grove Street College
Oakland, California

Marking system A, B, C, D, I, CR*, NCR*, W

Students may repeat a course in which the grade was D, I, W, CR or NCR. The first grade earned will be changed to "W."

(*Course designated in catalog as a credit/non-credit course.)

Macomb County Community College
Mt. Clemens, Michigan

Marking system A, B, C, D, W, I

Des Moines Area Community College
Ankeny, Iowa

Marking system A, B, C, D, F, W, I

Students are allowed to repeat failed courses. Initial grade is removed and not counted in G.P.A.

Kansas City Kansas Community College
Kansas City, Kansas

Marking system A, B, C, D, (F or no-credit left to option of teacher).

Pass-no credit option available one course per semester for a total of no more than 12 hours.

Polk Junior College
Winter Haven, Florida

Marking system A, B, C, D, I, S*, W, NC

May repeat, second grade counts.

(* satisfactory)

Lincoln Nebraska Technical Community College
Lincoln, Nebraska

Marking system A, B, C, U, I

Each program has its own grading system, some use per cents.

Sacramento City College
Sacramento, California

Marking system A, B, C, D, CR, NC, I, W

May repeat courses, the grade in the last enrollment is used.

Laney College
Oakland, California

Marking system A, B, C, D, F, I, W

Permitted to repeat a course once. Grades are recorded for each attempt. However, unit credit is granted only for the first completion.

The previous data show the diversity of systems in present use. It would seem valuable to conduct a detailed survey to determine if some standardization were possible.